

REMARKS

In view of both the amendments presented above and the following discussion, the Applicants submit that none of the claims now pending in the application is anticipated under the provisions of 35 USC § 102 or obvious under the provisions of 35 USC § 103. Thus, the Applicants believe that all of these claims are now in allowable form.

If, however, the Examiner believes that there are any unresolved issues requiring adverse final action in any of the claims now pending in the application, the Examiner should telephone Mr. Peter L. Michaelson, Esq. at (732) 530-6671 so that appropriate arrangements can be made for resolving such issues as expeditiously as possible.

Status of Action

The Examiner had inadvertently checked off boxes 2a and 2b of the Office Action Summary for the present action. As such, this indicated that the action is both final and non-final, and hence is inconsistent. Accordingly, the Applicant's attorney conferred with the Examiner by telephone on June 2, 2004 to gain requisite clarification. The Examiner stated that the present action is non-final. Hence, the Applicants will treat it as such.

Status of claims

The Applicants have amended claims 2, 5, 13, 18, 21 and 29, and have added new claims 34-57.

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Independent claims 2 and 18 now incorporate certain limitations from claims 5 and 21, respectively.

New independent claims 34 and 46 contain the limitations of independent claims 2 and 18, as they stood prior to this amendment, and certain limitations from claims 8 and 24, respectively.

Objections

The Examiner has objected to claims 5-9, 13-17, 21-25 and 29-33 as being dependent on a rejected base claim. The Examiner stated that all these dependent claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations of the base and any intervening claims.

The Applicants have now re-written independent claims 2 and 18 to incorporate certain limitations from claims 5 and 21, respectively.

Furthermore, the Applicants have added new claims 34-57 wherein new independent claims 34 and 46 contain the limitations of independent claims 2 and 18, as they stood prior to this amendment, and certain limitations from claims 8 and 24, respectively.

Hence, all of the Applicants' claims are now allowable.

Rejections

A. Rejection under 35 USC § 102(e)

The Examiner has rejected claims 2-4 and 18-20 under the provisions of 35 USC § 102(e) as being anticipated by the Angles et al patent (United States patent 5,933,811 issued to P. D. Angles et al on August 3, 1999).

In view of the amendments now made to the Applicants' claims -- as discussed in the section immediately above captioned "Objections", this rejection is moot.

B. Rejection under 35 USC § 103

The Examiner has rejected claims 10-12 and 26-28 under the provisions of 35 USC § 103 as being obvious over the teachings of the Angles et al patent.

Similarly, in view of the amendments now made to the Applicants' claims -- as discussed in the above section captioned "Objections", this rejection is also moot.

Conclusion

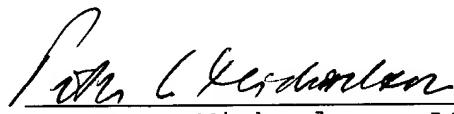
Thus, the Applicants submit that none of the claims, presently in the application, is anticipated under the provisions of 35 USC § 102 or obvious under the provisions of 35 USC § 103.

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Consequently, the Applicants believe that all their claims, as they now stand, are presently in condition for allowance. Accordingly, both reconsideration of this application and its swift passage to issue are earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited on **June 9, 2004** with the United States Postal Service as first class mail, with sufficient postage, in an envelope addressed to Commissioner for Patents, P. O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450.


Signature


Reg. No.